Bringing dogs onto campus: inclusions and exclusions of animal bodies in organisations

Nickie Charles and Carol Wolkowitz, University of Warwick

ABSTRACT
Since the early years of the twentieth century, work organisations have largely been places where animal bodies are absent or invisible. Recently US and UK universities have facilitated therapy dog visits to improve students' well-being. In this paper we analyse data on therapy dog visits to a UK university library as a starting point for thinking about other than human animals in organisations and the gendered dimensions of their inclusion and exclusion. Rather than focusing solely on the benefits of these encounters for students, we put the experiences of the dogs and their guardians centre stage, along with those of the library staff and the students. Drawing on observations of visits to a UK university library in 2015-16, and a total of 16 interviews with library staff, guardians and students, we explore the instrumental rationale for the programme and the efforts to control any potential disruption of normative organisational expectations.

Key words: therapy dogs, touch, animal bodies, inclusion, exclusion, campus, university library, gender.

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Bringing dogs onto campus: inclusions and exclusions of animal bodies in organisations

Organisations such as universities, where animals are normally only present in science labs, have begun to welcome dogs onto campus. This trend is well established in the US and has recently been taken up in the UK where, in response to increasing stress levels amongst students, some universities are facilitating visits by therapy dogs to enhance 'the student experience'. The benefits of therapy dogs for residents of nursing homes and hospital wards are well known (e.g. Knisely et al, 2012) and it seems that bringing therapy dogs onto campus, often into university libraries, is similarly positive (Crossman et al, 2015; Somerville et al, 2008). It is a cheap and effective way of addressing increasing stress amongst student populations (Barker et al, 2016; Barker et al, 2012), especially when resources for counselling services cannot meet demand (Stewart et al, 2014), and dogs exert a calming effect, reducing reported levels of loneliness and increasing student 'happiness' (Aiken and Cadmus, 2011; Stewart et al, 2014). Furthermore, touch, which is central to student-dog encounters, is linked to positive emotions and stress reduction (Colarelli et al, 2017).

In the context of an increasingly consumerist university-student relationship there are, however, other reasons for bringing therapy dogs onto campus. In the digital age universities can no longer assume that students will visit the library to find books or journal articles or even to study and bringing dogs in is an effective means of encouraging alternative reasons for library use (Jalongo and McDevitt, 2015; Lannon and Harrison, 2015). It creates an interest in the library and its staff and identifies the library as a 'third space' where students can hang out as they might in coffee bars or the Students' Union (Aiken and Cadmus, 2011). Bringing dogs in is also associated with student engagement programmes designed to promote students' ongoing attachment to their universities and active involvement in their studies. Such programmes may construe students as isolated individuals, with the 'objects, resources and devices' (in our case, dogs) that can enhance student participation relegated to the status of tool, backcloth or context (Goulay, 2015: 407).

Dogs are brought onto university campuses, therefore, for instrumental reasons, to reduce stress levels amongst students and encourage library use, and this instrumentality is reflected in the way these interventions have been researched. Little attention is paid to the dogs, apart from defining the role of therapy dogs (in the US) as providing 'emotional support to people by being calm, friendly, well-mannered, and attuned to the emotional states of humans' (Jalongo and McDevitt, 2015), a definition which itself centres on the effect therapy dogs have on humans. Nowhere is the experience of the volunteer dog-human team considered and the only appearance that the dogs make is in the occasional photograph surrounded by students (see for e.g. Reynolds and Rabschutz, 2011). The literature also hints that bringing therapy dogs onto campus can be seen as 'unserious' (Aiken and Cadmus, 2011) and we suspect that this reflects gendered assumptions about pet dogs.

In this paper we put the experiences of the dogs and their human companions[i] centre stage, along with those of the library staff and the students. Rather than focusing solely on the benefits of bringing dogs onto campus, we use therapy dogs' visits to the university as a starting point for thinking about other than human animals in organisations and the gendered dimensions of their inclusion and exclusion. In so

doing we attempt to take account not only of the human participants' experiences but also those of their non-human companions, taking seriously the contention that relations between humans and other animals can be understood as a process that changes both human and animal participant (Despret, 2004; Haraway, 2008).

Organisations, animals and gender

There is a substantial literature analysing the different ways in which organisations are gendered and the processes of inclusion and exclusion that maintain a gendered hierarchy but scholars have only recently begun to think of organisations as anthropocentric and involved in processes of inclusion and exclusion of animals (Sage et al, 2012). Indeed we are so used to organisations excluding animals that those that do not, such as veterinary practices, animal shelters and organisations training assistance animals, are seen as exceptions and are not often the focus of organisational study (Hamilton and Taylor, 2012). There is, however, a trend to bring animals into organisations where they are seen not as workers but as emotional support for human employees or relaxation for consumers. Thus a number of organisations allow their employees to bring their companion animals to work (Knisley et al, 2012; Wilkin et al, 2016) and animal cafes, where you can stroke a cat while sipping your coffee, are springing up in many major cities (Plourde, 2014). These exceptions apart, animals tend not to be physically present in organisations; they are excluded except when they play a therapeutic role or participate in experiments: the former are visible but the latter remain invisible (unless animal rights activists draw attention to them) and the conditions of inclusion for both categories of animal are that they benefit the organisation. Moreover, even when included they are subordinate to humans and their status is contradictory and unstable (O'Doherty, 2016). As Donna Haraway recounts, her dog Cayenne was only allowed onto the university campus as a 'research dog' rather than as her 'friend' (Haraway, 2008: 205-6) and therapy dogs, in their guise as pets, may be excluded while, if defined as 'service' dogs, may be included (Aiken and Cadmus, 2011).

We suggest that the contradictions inherent in the inclusion, exclusion and subordination of non-human animals can be likened to the inclusion, exclusion and subordination of women in organisations. The latter is linked historically to dualistic conceptions of the human body that relegate embodied relationality to private life (Lee, 2017). The entry of women into organisations was feared because women's unruly or 'leaky' bodies challenge the taken for granted, implicitly male, contained and bounded organisational body (Linstead, 2000). Hence, women's presence was initially countenanced only if feminine bodies kept to the stereotypical, subordinated places assigned them (Banta 1995). How much more is this the case with animals whose bodily presence raises questions about the permeability of the human-animal boundary, as well as the hegemony of masculine (human) embodiment within organisations. Therapy dogs, like women, may be assigned particular subordinate roles within organisations, roles in which both their embodiment and their subjectivity are central but rarely acknowledged. At the same time the presence of animal bodies is a potential challenge to the anthropocentric order of the organisation in ways that parallel the challenges posed by the presence of differently gendered and 'raced' bodies (Puwar, 2004).

Animal bodies assume a particular significance in the therapeutic process because of the importance of touch. Moreover, touch is central to the interaction between companion animals and their humans (Charles, 2017); indeed Haraway begins her book *When Species Meet* with a question: 'Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?' (2008:3)[ii]. Therapy animals, however, make themselves available to human touch in a relationship that is different from an intimate relationship with a human companion, and it is their embodiment that enables them to do their therapeutic work. Moreover, the operations of power within organisations render both human and animal bodies 'docile' (Foucault, 1991); if animal bodies are not docile they are not suited to being therapy dogs (Jalongo and McDevitt, 2015).

It is in this context that we ask how we can understand interactions with therapy dogs within organisations and to what extent the mutual engagement of student and dog is both dependent on their active participation and conditional on the dog's subordination. Furthermore, because we take seriously the analytical point that organisations are gendered, we ask whether the inclusion of therapy dogs in organisations is gendered and to what extent it challenges the organisational order.

The study

This study was initiated when 'Midland University' began bringing dogs into the library in order to reduce students' stress during summer exams. It formed part of a wider programme, in the library and elsewhere on campus, to encourage student involvement and attachment to the university. The organisation invited to collaborate is known as Pets as Therapy, which is a UK charity, set up by a woman and mostly run by women, that sends volunteer teams – dogs and their guardians – to places requesting visits from therapy dogs. PAT teams usually visit organisations such as nursing homes, hospices, long-stay children's hospital wards, and primary schools, but now they are also being invited onto university campuses and into their libraries. The dogs are known as PAT dogs.

It is widely recognised that it is difficult to research or represent the 'point of view' of the animal yet we started from the position that the dogs were social actors in this encounter with students. This led to our use of participant observation and visual methods to enable us to capture the nature of the dogs' participation in ways other than through the words of the humans involved (Charles, 2014; Hamilton and Taylor, 2012). We share the commitment of a multi-species ethnographic approach by being open to how animals as well as humans shape the interactions that take place within organisations (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010). We pay attention to the dogs as well as to the human actors and, in so far as we are able, recognise their subjectivity and give them a 'voice'. We took photographs at the events, and were grateful for copies of photographs taken by a member of the library team. She also made a video recording of one of the sessions at our request, which in principle allows us to bring in the dogs in a more immediate way than is possible through verbal descriptions alone (Hamilton and Taylor, 2012).

In our observations we tried to capture the 'subtlety of the social interaction between the species' (Hamilton and Taylor, 2012: 48); for this to be successful the non-verbal is critical and 'how people are affected, bodily, emotionally and verbally, by the display or presence of animals' can be observed (Hamilton and Taylor, 2012: 49). It

was also important to observe how the dogs were affected. We were therefore attentive to those signs that reveal something about the inner state of the other, 'however imperfectly' (Haraway, 2008: 226). Our observations took place during five PAT dog visits between November 2015 and May 2016, when we joined the dogs and their human companions as they entered the building, accompanied them as they left, and sat with the students surrounding each PAT team. We were particularly attentive to the interactions of guardians, students and dogs.

As well as observing the PAT dog visits we carried out 16 interviews: two with library staff members, both of whom were white women; five PAT dog guardians, all women, and nine students, seven women and two men. The guardians we interviewed were all white, married women of 50 to 75 years old, from a variety of occupational backgrounds, some working full or part-time and some retired. They were all interviewed in their homes with their dog/s present. The students were younger and much more mixed in terms of ethnicity. They came from six different countries: four white British home students, two students from European countries and three from Asia. They comprised five undergraduates, two MA students, and two PhD students and all came from well-to-do business or professional families. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Access was straightforward. The library staff were happy to have us participate in the PAT sessions and to be interviewed themselves. We approached the guardians during the visits, asking if we could contact them to arrange an interview. The library staff contacted all the students who had participated in sessions for us, asking them to volunteer for an interview by emailing us directly. We interviewed the first nine to contact us, in either private offices or university coffee bars. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. We analysed the interview transcripts and our written observations thematically, reading all transcripts several times. Although we include in this paper four photographs, we have yet to analyse our visual data.

The paper is divided into four sections focussing on: the organisation of the PAT dog visits, the PAT dog team, the student-dog interactions and the gendering of these events. Throughout we highlight the mechanisms of control that ensure that although dogs are included, their inclusion is conditional, temporary and dependent on their meeting very specific criteria, the most important of which is that they benefit both the students and the organisation.

Organising PAT dog visits

The PAT dog visits require a high degree of subordination to organisational goals by all the participants, including the dogs. They are part of a wider programme to 'support the whole student' which has its own logo and mascot, a toy animal; the dogs' visits are the most popular part. The programme has instrumental goals that are recognised by those who organise it: it is good for student recruitment, increases students' sense of 'belonging' and may encourage them to donate to the University as alumni. Within this overall framework, however, library staff are genuinely interested in the wellbeing of students and they themselves welcome the opportunity to interact with the dogs.

Publicity for the events highlights the *effectiveness* of spending time with the dogs, a critical term in student engagement discourse (Macfarlane and Tomlinson, 2017). Rather than celebrating playful events where students can interact freely with dogs, it frames the goals of the events instrumentally, offering a scientifically validated, de-stressing experience to enhance wellbeing ('Research shows that interacting with companion animals like dogs…') and frames students as entitled consumers ('PAT dogs are here to help you through your Term 3 stress'). This runs alongside photographs from previous PAT dog visits of students engaging with the dogs. The publicity posters use a line drawing of a happy dog which appears eager to please. The events offer a limited period of interaction (increased from 10 to 15 minutes as a result of student feedback), requiring students to sign up for a particular time slot. Between one and two hundred students attend each time the dogs visit, usually twice a term, and each visit lasts an hour and a half. Before the session starts the dog-guardian teams are placed at three to six points within the large room – the number depends on the number of dogs who are able to attend on the day – each surrounded by low, cushioned seating (See Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

The sessions are calm and quiet, even with so many students participating, due partly to a degree of regimentation. Students queue outside the door before their time slot, and are admitted in groups of about 30. They funnel through the door and sit with the different dogs, usually spending some time with each. The atmosphere is somewhat contradictory. One the one hand, students' interaction with the dogs is delighted, and sometimes exuberant, with lots of touching and occasional hugging. On the other hand, their time with the dogs is tightly disciplined. A digital clock is projected onto a screen at the front of the large room, and as each group's session reaches ten minutes the students are warned, as in university examinations, that they have five minutes left. As each group of students leaves they are invited to make a donation to the PAT charity and asked to provide feedback on a whiteboard. Despite the efficient way in which the event is organised, it is exhausting for the organisers (six to seven staff participate in some way) and, as we discuss later, for the guardians and dogs.

Great care is taken by the organisers to maintain a predictable, orderly event that minimises disruption to library routines and other library users. This can be seen as a recognition that animal bodies in the library are potentially problematic. Dogs should be quiet and appropriately behaved, there should be no evidence that they have been in the library and they must not cause offence to those students who do not appreciate their presence. Hence the visits involve, firstly, advance planning to segregate the dogs. Staff meet the dogs and their guardians at a back door of the library, normally used for deliveries, and shepherd them upstairs in the staff-only lift. The sequestration of the dogs, we were told, is partly due to the insistence of the team responsible for facilities, who say that in the past the library 'has had issues with students from other cultures being very upset by the presence of a guide dog'. But sometimes segregation is resisted, as on one occasion when a PAT dog team left the library by the main staircase and startled a student; this is the sort of encounter the organisers are at pains to avoid but cannot altogether eliminate.

Secondly, care is taken to manage and contain the dogs' bodily needs. One member of staff always brings a water bowl around for the dogs after the first hour, and more

frequently after that (the guardians usually get a cup of tea). Cleaners are pre-booked to hoover the room after the session, and, as one of the interviewed students said:

> I know the facilities manager, and what would happen if one of those dogs peed in a corner on the carpet, I know she wouldn't be very happy about that, so there's, it's quite a concession to make…that's quite generous for a team that's so protective of their spaces. (Angela)

The students mostly agree that the potential for disruption by the dogs is minimised by the out of the way location of the event as well as by its meticulous organisation.

> [The dogs] were in a room I'd never been in, and it was all closed off, it almost didn't feel like we were in the library…It was kind of in a corner in a room.

This hidden quality of the events has been noted elsewhere (Aiken and Cadmus, 2011) and indicates that even though dogs are included in the organisation, their visibility is kept to a minimum.

The library team has developed friendly relations with the local PAT branch, respect for the unpaid contribution of the guardians and fondness for particular dogs. They are unable to pay for the visits and were so disappointed with the meagre donations from students that they decided to launch a Christmas collection for the charity among library staff. But the pleasure they (and the students) take in interacting with the dogs is subordinated to meeting the library's narrowly defined objectives regarding student wellbeing. As their website says to students, 'Come and pat your stress away…Can you think of a better excuse for a break?'

The PAT teams

The dogs and their human companions are a 'cross-species team of skilled adults' (Haraway, 2008:225) undertaking unpaid voluntary work. They have to be assessed before being accepted as a PAT team, and although it appears to be the dog who is assessed, it is actually the partnership. The assessment consists of observing the dog's behaviour when physically linked by a lead to their guardian and exposing them to various situations in which they have to demonstrate a calm temperament. Indeed, calm was a word that was often used by our interviewees to describe the dogs, the effect they had on those they visited, and the event itself. This calmness meant that dogs could be trusted around frail and vulnerable people.

> They've got to be well behaved, when they're assessed it's quite stringent and you've got to be able to trust them because if you've got elderly people with papery skin or people who are ill, which a lot of them are, you can't have a dog unless you can trust it. (Dorothy and Sidney)

They also had to demonstrate a tolerance of being touched 'all over' (Janet and Monty). Becoming a PAT dog is seen as dependent on temperament rather than training and an ability to tolerate touch. A 'normal' dog would not be suitable for this work.

> [Y]ou can't have a dog that is what I call a normal, nuisance dog, all dogs. I mean my terriers would never have done it because they'd be too active, and if they heard something they'd bark, well I mean they don't want that. (Dorothy and Sidney)

PAT dogs were 'good dogs'. They knew how to behave and their temperaments facilitated this. Their guardians had only considered PAT work because of the dogs' calm temperament. However, this understanding of PAT dogs as not needing any training renders invisible the skills that they have acquired through the socialisation and training involved in becoming domestic companions. In particular their ability to tolerate touch is naturalised.

Once teams have been assessed they are ready to begin work. Both partners have a uniform to indicate that they are a team – the yellow collar, lead and jacket for the dogs match the guardians' yellow T-shirts (see Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

The technology of lead and coat are important in shaping the dogs' behaviour, since they know what is expected of them once they are 'in harness'. This is also the case with guide dogs and other assistance dogs who behave differently when in harness (Whelan, 2016). The dog's jacket also shows that the team has been officially validated by PAT and that the dog is a *bona fide* therapy dog. However, because stroking the dogs is such an important part of the dog-student encounter, guardians often remove the dogs' jackets. The dogs also have to be clean.

> We have to keep them very clean, bathing and that sort of thing. (Dorothy and Sidney)

This was particularly important for visits to hospitals and nursing homes but 'hygiene' was also a consideration in the university library. One of the guardians did not allow her dog to lick her genitals while working as she might subsequently transfer bacteria to a student's hand.

Like the library staff, the PAT teams find the visits tiring and by the end of each visit many of the dogs are asleep. As one of the library staff commented, they're 'all peopled out'; the dogs' exhaustion suggests that what appears to be passive acquiescence to the touch of strangers requires significant effort on the dogs' part.

Despite the tiredness, most guardians thought their dogs enjoyed the visits. An indication of this is that they get excited when they see their 'uniform' being readied before leaving home. In one interview the guardian and her dog demonstrated this:

> He has a special lead, the yellow one that you see, whereas when he normally walks he's got the extending one, and if I say to him - - [*I'll show you, she says, picking up the yellow lead and talking to Sidney]* 'Sidney, do you want to go to work? You want to go to work now or later? What do you think, you do? Want to go to work?' …[*Sidney barks excitedly and wags his tail*] … He's going to be disappointed. *[To Sidney]* 'No, we're not, we'll go later, go later.' (Dorothy and Sidney)

Other indications of the dogs' enjoyment are that they anticipate visits with excitement – pulling on the lead or whimpering with excitement on arrival in the car - and that they can be 'more themselves' with the students than in other visiting situations.

> I think she's more herself with the students, she just lies there and has a wonderful time being stroked. (Sarah and Abby)

Guardians were also enthusiastic about visiting the university and enjoyed their conversations with the students. It was different from visiting people who were ill or approaching the end of their lives and it is possible that the guardians as well as the dogs were able to be more themselves (see also Reynolds and Rabschutz, 2011).

These comments suggest that the dogs can interact with students more freely than with people who may be frail or ill and that their guardian's control is more relaxed.

> I allowed her to have a lot more freedom with the students, because with the poorly people I refer to 'Lola', I say, 'Lola, poorly people, we do gentle' …//… [*At the university*] I didn't really command her to be gentle because she didn't need me to, I mean she wasn't all over them, she was still very calm, but she wasn't, you know, she wasn't boinging around, but I didn't have to keep, you know, keep re-commanding her. (Jackie and Lola)

But even in these circumstances dogs are still constrained and may sometimes have less room for manoeuvre and certainly less possibility of establishing relationships than in the other places they visit.

> I think it's different because the students come to him, he's in one place so there is a difference …//… occasionally, you might have heard me, I might have to say, 'No, sit, stay, you're not going yet, stay', and then he sort of accepts it, whereas if he's at a home or at the day centre or stroke unit, anywhere else, most of the time he is going to them, if there's a roomful of people he will, on his own, work the room, the first ones he'll go to are the ones he knows. (Dorothy and Sidney)

As well as having their movement restricted, the dogs are also under control in the sense that they are expected to observe certain standards of behaviour. Although dogs may greet other dogs upon arrival, they have to stay on the lead and cannot play with each other or be too boisterous. Treats are often used to reinforce 'good' behaviour and keep dogs from getting bored. Needless to say they also have to keep their 'leaky bodies' in check. Within these constraints, however, the dogs vary in how they interact with the students. One of the students described what happened:

> I do remember there were dogs that sort of one person would pet them for a while and then they'd get up and they'd go to someone who wasn't interacting with them, and then that person would pet them for a while and they'd get up and go to the next person. (Jonathan)

Another dog, who was involved with Guide Dogs and had therefore developed the skills to cope with many different social situations,

> was on her feet most of the time, wagging her tail, interacting with the students and particularly looking for treats as Jo, her owner, had brought a bag of chopped-up carrots with her. She seemed perfectly relaxed and wandered about investigating the students and other dogs from time to time. (Fieldnotes)

The active engagement of this dog contrasted with some of the others, two of whom spent most of the time on their backs (Figure 3).

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Their interaction with the students was limited to being touched by them although one, from time to time, investigated a new person who had appeared in her circle.

Dogs' behaviour varied not only between dogs but over time. One of the students observed that, towards the end of the session, 'it looks like they don't really care what's going on' (Angela). And our fieldnotes record that one of the dogs,

> looked miserable when he came into the library, tail down and shaking, and he lay down and rolled over while the students were there. [His guardian] said that he always reacts like that to the lead – tail down – and that he's quite different at home, all bouncy and full of life.

This indicates a different reaction to the technology of lead from that reported earlier and suggests that this dog perhaps tolerates the situation rather than actively enjoying it. Indeed, when he gets home, he races about and is all bouncy, whereas in the library he spent most of the time lying on his back.

Another dog, for whom this was a first visit, was not comfortable being surrounded by so many people. This observation reveals his guardian's sensitivity to the signs of his lack of enjoyment:

> I wasn't quite sure at the university how it was [for him], being surrounded by people …//… I thought he looked a little bit, not as relaxed; at school he'll just lie down, he's completely relaxed. I mean the students were all very good with him, there was no problem at all, but I don't think – he's not really used to being surrounded by so many people. (Janet and Monty)

It also reveals that she understands her dog as having similar reactions to her own; she was feeling quite stressed during the visit, as they had arrived late. Other guardians visiting for the first time also found the number of students involved a bit overwhelming so it is not surprising that the dogs may also have been overwhelmed.

> I was amazed the volume of students that wanted to do it …//… and they would come and just sort of sit around your feet, I was flabbergasted by that. (Jackie and Lola)

Guardians were attentive to the way their dogs were feeling and would discontinue a placement if they thought their dog was not happy. They respected the dogs' wishes and if they thought they were bored or unwilling to do something they would not force them. One explained why she had decided to stop visiting a residential home.

> I just had the feeling she was getting a bit bored with it …//… she used to start skipping places …//… so I gathered she was getting a bit bored with it, and a few of the people who were very fond of her had died …//… so I felt it was the right time to move on. (Sarah and Abby)

The dogs' feelings were understood through their behaviour and bodily signs, as is clear in this description of a dog's reaction to the university lift.

> But the lift, her whole body language, for a split second she froze, I watched her legs change position and obviously a balance thing, cos obviously she felt the floor moving, we know what it is, she wouldn't, if I said, 'We're in a lift,' what's a lift to her? But she'd never been in one before. (Jackie and Lola)

These accounts show that the dogs' human companions respond with care to how the dogs are affected in different situations and by different forms of interaction. They do this in the context of their 'entangled relationship' and as a team that is 'more than one but less than two' (Haraway, 2008: 227). They also highlight the limited room for manoeuvre experienced by the dogs, the fact that the guardians exercise control and that both dogs and guardians are operating within organisational norms. The dogs' interactions can be understood as governed by relations of authority and it is 'the human [who] decides for the dog what the acceptable criteria of performance must be' (Haraway, 2008: 221). They are there because of the choices made by their guardians and these choices shape the conditions of their agency (Carter and Charles, 2013); in other words the options open to them are limited and, while some actively engage, others respond by being 'patient' and tolerating the situation as best they can.

As well as being attuned to how their dogs were affected, guardians were also aware of how students were affected by engaging with the dogs. They observed that interacting with the dogs lightened students' mood.

> Just, not by just what they say but just sort of watching them and they seem to relax and they seem to, they seem to get something from it, they seem to absorb a sort of calmness almost. [*later*] Mentally they seem to be in a slightly better place when they go because you can't help but smile and just smiling improves your mental health doesn't it? (Sarah and Abby)

Interactions between dog and student were mediated by guardians but it was the presence of the dogs that enabled these interactions to take place. Guardians thought that the encounter was beneficial for the students, because students were talking to each other face-to-face, instead of interactions being mediated by technology. The physical co-presence not only of the dogs but also of fellow students and guardians was important to the encounter and, in a sense, the dogs made social interaction possible; this is commonly reported by Guide Dog users (Whelan, 2016). Guardians engage with the students, answering their questions about their dog and listening to students talking about their own dogs and how much they miss them. This was a

recurring theme in the guardian interviews, that students missed contact with their own dogs and welcomed the opportunity to stroke a visiting PAT dog.

The student experience

While the library staff, guardians and dogs who participate in the PAT events have to exercise a degree of control, students relish the time they spend with the dogs partly because they can relinquish, for a short time, some of the drive and self-control required to meet their university obligations. Interaction with the dogs provides an acceptable opportunity -- especially for the young women -- to express and share emotions, in what one (male) student called 'a spectacular show of neediness'. However, the occasion may also evoke a desire for a more reciprocal and active being with a dog that cannot be met by the PAT sessions, suggesting how much the interactions, however pleasurable, are constrained by organisational priorities, such as the definition of achievable goals and the efficient use of time. In addition, the fact that these visits take place indoors, in a university library, constrains the forms of interaction that are possible – lively play is not considered appropriate.

We have three sources of data on students' expectations and experience of the PAT events: our own observations of the students' interactions with each other, the guardians and the dogs; the comments they wrote on the feedback whiteboard at the end of each session; and our interviews with nine students. Each of these gives a different impression.

As described above, the main observed reaction of the students was pleasure. Crowding round each dog, the students perch on the low furniture, coo at and pet the dogs, chat to the guardians and join the dogs on the floor; this is especially true of the women students. They also take photographs of the dogs, or ask a friend to take a photograph of them with a dog. However, there are usually a few individuals, mostly young men, who look uncertain and uncomfortable, and who take a long time to begin interacting with the dogs.

The programme organisers solicit student feedback in the form of comments written on a whiteboard (Figure 4) and this was greatly appreciated by the guardians. One said it was an 'absolutely genius idea' and went on:

> The feedback is very open and honest and really, really very nice, it's very rewarding to read it really. I guess the people who get nothing out of it perhaps don't write anything, but that's fair enough …//… but there's certainly a lot of very positive comments to make it all worthwhile really. (Sarah and Abby)

This was something that guardians did not get (at least not in this form) from the other places they visited and enhanced their enjoyment of the university visits.

Student comments, usually a few words and an emoji, concentrate on how the dogs look and how they feel to touch:

- Too cute!
- They are like soft pillows

- Thanks for the fluff-cuddle session
- Calming

There is both an uncritical acceptance of the brevity of the interaction, and its largely functional purpose, as in the first comment below, *and* a longing for more contact with the dogs. This tension also runs through the student interviews.

- Adorable ❤ Great as a break from working, thank you
- Can I take one home?
- I need this everyday!
- My goal is to be as chilled out as Oscar 🐾

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

While it is easy to understand why the guardians are so pleased to see this appreciation of their dogs, the comments mainly treat the dogs as (fluffy) objects of pleasure. Different qualities and personalities among the dogs are recognised, but subordinated to how well they meet the needs of the human speaker, rather than as sentient beings with their own needs and preferences. Although these attitudes could also be found in the interviews (Susie, for instance, says that she would not want 'to miss the best dogs', as if it were a beauty contest), the transcripts reveal a much more complex response to the dogs.

Acceptance of Organisational Norms

In the interviews we asked the students what they thought about the idea of bringing dogs into the library. Hardly any of them had really thought about the novelty of this, instead taking it for granted as yet another 'offer' that the university makes to its students — part of the organisation rather than a challenge to it. As Jonathan said,

> Well, they're interested in student welfare. I just thought that … it is part of their job and obviously they expend a lot of energy stressing us out so I suppose it's a good idea to spend a little bit moving in the other direction.

It was only three of the non-UK students, from Eastern Europe and India, who appreciated the novelty of the visits, but in two cases their surprise was more about the University's concern for student welfare than the presence of the dogs on campus. There was one international student, however, who thought that the dogs' presence challenged the human-centred focus of the library, seeing it as,

> [A] very unconventional move, because I think most libraries in the world haven't actually come to admitting dogs in this manner, … somehow it is like, you know, makes the library less about humans … [not just something] happening between books and men, but also something between like, you know, in a very non-anthropocentric kind of way. (Mukul)

Most students, however, saw the events as controlled and contained, so not encroaching on ordinary services or relationships, and even Mukul saw the event as a 'controlled experiment'. Moreover, by the time we did our observations the dogs' visits had become an eagerly awaited and predictable part of the term; six of the nine students had attended previous events in either the library or the Students' Union.[iii] The students could be considered 'good students', in so far as they used the events as intended, not letting them disrupt their studies. While the previous year students had complained that the ten-minute sessions were too short, once the sessions had been increased to 15 minutes most were happy to allocate only a small amount of time to visiting the dogs, so that it provided a break which enhanced rather than challenging their concentration on their studies. They retain their commitment to meeting university demands, seeking only a brief respite in which to 'shift the focus' or 'slow down':

> I didn't overdo my 15-minute break, and I …[could] just go back and sit down and keep working. So leading up to it is a bit stressful [because of watching the clock] but after it does decrease [stress] I think…because you focus on [something] outside yourself. (Angela)

Another student told us during our observations that she did not participate in the Students Union events because walking to the Union, and getting distracted there, was likely to take her away from her seat in the library for too long.

Students' interactions with the PAT dogs

In explaining why they wanted to attend the sessions, or their feelings during them, students talked extensively about how rewarding their interactions with PAT dogs were, especially the physicality of the dogs, but also the dogs' capacity to capture their attention and alter their focus.

While their reasons for attending the session varied, they most commonly said, 'I just like animals…They just bring a positive atmosphere to everything' (Lilian) and touching the dogs was particularly important. Erika talked about stroking the dogs, as she does her cat at home, while Mukul attended the session because he was longing for 'a feel of the dogs', and enjoyed 'the lingering warmth that remains with you for the whole week'.

For students who obsess about their work, interacting with the dogs and stroking them calms the mind. Sarah says:

> I think it's 'cos I really like being around dogs and I always think dogs have quite a calming effect, so sort of even sort of just being with dogs sort of ten, fifteen minutes, it kind of calms you down and you can't really think about anything other than the dogs which is quite nice, because I sometimes get quite stressed about my work so it's quite nice to sort of have like an allotted fifteen minutes where I go and I don't think about anything 'cos then I get quite happy stroking some dogs.

The ‘calming effect’ she mentions can be understood in terms of the dogs calling forth an embodied, affective response from the students (Despret, 2004). Students feel calmer, happier and less stressed as a result of being with the dogs. They often imply that this is because the dogs’ affection is unconditional.

> [A]nother thing is that dogs give you unconditional love or friendliness, that people don’t tend to, and that’s why interacting with animals can be a bit different, they have that curiosity about them and especially dogs in particular, they tend to be drawn to humans unconditionally, regardless of who you are, and I think that’s also something that just makes you happy. (Erika)

We ourselves wondered whether the programme might be taking advantage of the dogs who, as we have seen, have little control over the conditions of their participation. For the students, however, this question hardly arises, because while they themselves have to consider their parents’ ambitions and their own futures, they see the dogs as just being themselves.

> They don’t stress about the same things we stress about, they don’t have the same concept of you know, deadlines, worries that we tend to have on a regular basis, they don’t have that … it’s tinged with a lot of underlying things, so to say, thinking about what would happen in the future, what that person’s thinking, things like that, whereas with an animal it’s a very simple interaction, you don’t think about you know, what does that animal think… dogs give you unconditional love or friendliness, that people don’t tend to. (Erika)

This unconditional love affects her in a positive way, changing her feelings so that she is happy rather than stressed.

None the less there were differences between the students in how they evaluated the interaction with the PAT dogs. Those who simply sought a calming, physical interaction were the most satisfied; Erika, for instance, said she was glad the dogs were not more playful, as that was not what she was looking for; their calmness and their calming effect on her were what she valued. Another international student was pleased mainly because the event gave her permission to touch and engage with dogs, something that she otherwise felt was missing. Others were, however, disappointed with the interactions, for instance commenting that ‘the communication isn’t as good as with dogs that you own or see a lot’ (Angela) and a few students, while insisting they had enjoyed the session, were more critical. We can contrast here the impressions of the guardians and some students. For instance, Laura, one of the guardians, was pleased when her dog was treated as a celebrity:

> [T]heir faces light up a lot of them, they walk in and they’re, oh look! And especially like Winston because he was on some of the posters and everything and ‘oh, is that the dog on the poster?’ you know, they seem to sort of, like, it’s as if, like, he’s a little star, you know, ‘ooh and I’m meeting him’, you know, then they get their phones out, can I have a photo, you know, but it’s just nice that it gives a bit of pleasure. (Laura and Winston)

In contrast Daisy, though happy when one of the dogs seemed to connect with her, was disappointed because no deeper interaction could take place:

> I enjoyed like, seeing the dogs and some of them were just so, like, friendly and just… there was one in particular which just came and put his head in my lap, and I was just stroking him, that was great, but then there were a couple where, because there were so many people they were kind of… it just didn't feel like you were kind of, hanging out with a pet. It was more like, almost like, if you… say you had a celebrity that you idolised and you kind of went to get a book signed or something. It's like a quick signing and then go out, like, being shoved on, whereas maybe in your head it would be like, a chat with the celebrity or whatever.

Daisy's boyfriend, Jonathan, warmed to the dogs despite the formality of the occasion and his scepticism,

> It's like -- I'm here to pet your dog in turn, we'll move around the room and pet all your dogs. So it was a little bit strange at first, and that along with the fact that I was actually surprisingly happy when I left and sort of relatively relaxed are the two things I remember about it.

Yet he was probably the most critical of all the interviewed students:

> [It's] a bit of a strange experience because it's sort of like patting a doll you know, like it's not because they are so relaxed and it's just sort of a dog lying on its back and you're like 'oh, that's soft'… and sometimes it gets up but not that much, it's kind of like playing with a toy rather than an animal.

Jonathan seems to have found himself objectifying the dogs, treating them as toys, even though he would prefer a different kind of relationship with the opportunity of interacting with the dogs and experiencing them as beings in their own right with their own subjectivity.

Similarly, while most students enjoyed chatting with the guardians, some felt that the guardians acted like chaperones or gatekeepers who inhibited the development of a one-to-one interaction with the dogs. Thus, while Lilian says that she likes talking to the owners and that they have given her the idea of doing PAT work with her own dog, another student complains that the presence of the guardian means that 'You can't talk directly to the dog or talk nonsense'. She belongs to a webgroup which has matched her with a dog she can take for walks and even have to stay overnight and finds this relationship much more rewarding. It creates a space for meaningful interaction with a particular dog, which she felt was missing in the PAT dog encounter.

Among the students a wish for less controlled, less *organised* interaction was associated with a preference for establishing a meaningful connection with the dogs, sometimes through play, and for greater integration of a dog in the interviewee's daily life. They would have liked the dogs to be more available to them rather than their

availability being mediated by the dogs' human companions and the constraints imposed by the venue and organisational goals. There was a contrast between those who were content with simply touching the dogs and those who wanted a more active encounter and, like us, regarded the dog's availability to multiple touchings as an objectifying process. But despite this all those we spoke to reported being positively affected by their encounters with the dogs.

The gendering of the visits

It was noteworthy that the PAT events on campus were perceived by staff, student participants and ourselves as highly gendered. This related not only to the greater presence of women staff and students, but also to the kinds of interactions between students and dogs established by the library's publicity beforehand and the location of the event.[iv] Although students were admirably reluctant to re-circulate gender stereotypes, they were actually quite sensitive to gendered expectations about interactions between people and dogs.

Almost all the library staff involved in the events were women. Of course this is partly due to the feminisation of librarianship more generally. At Midland University library there are two teams involved in the organisation of the PAT dog visits: a team which manages the physical space, and a team responsible for developing activities to encourage student engagement. This division of labour is gendered, with more men on the former (although its leader is a woman), and more women involved in student support (the latter comprises 5 women and 3 men, with the two top posts within the team being held by women). Although a few young men assisted with one or two of the five events, they were junior to the woman who was responsible for organising the sessions and their presence did not really challenge the events' feminine ethos.

The human members of the PAT teams are also nearly all women. Across the five events we observed, there was only one where a man was present as part of a PAT team, and one of the guardians we interviewed confirmed that most of those involved in this work were women and (a few) retired men. The dogs included both dogs and bitches but, as they are primarily classified as 'pets' rather than working dogs, they too are feminised (Ritvo, 1987).

The guardians were not surprised that more women volunteered than men, because it coincided with their understanding of conventionally gendered domestic roles. One told us that,

> Most of the Pets as Therapy work has tended to be going into nursing homes, that's probably the biggest part of their work, and I suppose it's more of a woman, a caring thing, isn't it? And, I suppose, perhaps, women have had more time at home than their partners or husbands, to be able to do it. (Janet and Monty)

Although an employed professional herself, she also made an interesting distinction between paid work, as men's forte, and voluntary work, which she saw as women's domain. In her view 'men use dogs for work, farmers, when you think of working dogs'. She went on,

> But, of course, they [men] probably haven't got time. I suppose you might say, they need to be working with their dogs, rather than out doing voluntary work, which is what it is.

This remark anticipates some of the distinctions the students made in how men and women relate to dogs, with men rather than women associated with working dogs.

None of the students spontaneously mentioned that the event was gendered but, when asked, they all said they had noticed that more women than men students attended. (Our rough counts varied, with women forming between two thirds and three quarters of the participants.) Most thought men's lower participation reflected their concern with their 'public' image. As Erika said,

> Some guys might not view it as a very manly thing to do to go and pet dogs…//… I would imagine it's something to do with how they view themselves in public…//…Yeah, they might think it's a bit embarrassing or not good for their image or something like that.

Indeed, one male international student thought it might be due to 'the whole vulnerability thing, that male egos might be a little shy of displaying in front of others'. As Susie says, 'a guy who's trying to be cool is not going to ask their guy friends if they want to go'.

Others thought that the gender imbalance was due to women's and men's different way of relating to animals. Women students commented that: 'It's easier for us to connect with "something" that needs care' (Angela); 'In my country the women would be a bit more sentimental, attached to the sort of things like love, cute dogs' (Adele); 'Girls would spend time talking about puppies, TV programmes about dogs' (Susie). One male student saw the event as deeply gendered, reflecting a feminine rather than masculine relation with dogs. He perceived the marketing of the programme as 'puppy-based' (which it isn't[v]) and went on to say:

> Whereas in my head men and dogs are associated with a manly dog. I don't know, when you think about men and dogs you kind of think about a man and his dog and that sort of loyal bond between a man, like you know it's a husky or like a sheep dog or something like that. Where a lot of the marketing was about playing like with a group of puppies which I don't think a lot of men might, I don't know, but maybe they just wouldn't really associate that as something that's for them. It's not that they wouldn't enjoy it… Going to that environment on your own would be a bit weird. I don't think there were any guys there who were there with other guys… Maybe that association of…sort of cute dogs [is] associated with girls and loyal dogs associated with men.

His comments were echoed by another male student, who would have preferred the event to be 'a little bit less formal and a little bit less controlled probably …just maybe let them play in a field and then I think those who want to spend time can also play with them, like play fetch or something like that.' The other male student also

expressed a preference for moving the event outdoors, suggesting that the indoor location of the event links touching the dogs with femininity, emotions and vulnerability rather than the 'rugged', masculine outdoors.

Conclusions

In these conclusions we reflect on what the PAT dog visits to a university library can tell us about the conditions of inclusion of animals in organisations and how they are gendered. We also consider the difference made to our understanding of dog-student-guardian interactions when we go beyond existing research on the use of therapy dogs in universities and problematise rather than assume the dogs' cooperation.

Our evidence shows that the interactions between staff, students, and therapy dog-human teams is contextualised by an instrumental view of the purpose of bringing dogs onto campus. Universities are trying to construct new relationships with their students, drawing on models of the student as a consumer (who can choose to go elsewhere), and developing often ill-defined or contradictory 'student engagement' policies to increase students' satisfaction, as measured by surveys, and reduce drop-out rates, especially those related to mental health (Gourlay 2015; Macfarlane and Tomlinson 2017). Such moves are not unrelated to wider changes in the governance of organisations involving new modes of control, including the construction of new subjectivities and new modes of embodiment (Martin 1994). In universities such moves involve rewarding 'good', compliant students who study hard, 'good' staff who are accessible to students and – in the case of the PAT dog visits – incorporating 'good' dogs who are quiet, well-behaved, and help students study effectively, aided by their socialisation as companions and their guardians' watchful presence during the sessions.

Thus the conditions of inclusion for dogs in the library are that they contribute to organisational goals through their beneficial effects on students' wellbeing and loyalty. Moreover, considerable effort goes into ensuring that the dogs' presence is contained, with no 'disruption' taking place. Although bodies and touch are central to the encounter, the dogs' bodies have to be invisible in the main spaces of the library; they do not mingle with students or wander round the book stacks. Their presence is clearly bounded, with their visits presented as a rare treat, outside the day-to-day functioning of the library — 'something different', as the students told us. So while the programme regularly brings dogs onto campus their presence remains exceptional and is not normalised. At the same time, these special visits are highly routinised. Although the same dogs do not attend all sessions, the five sessions we observed varied hardly at all, suggesting that a high degree of discipline underlies the event. It is hardly surprising that library staff remember with amusement the first, chaotic PAT dog visit, before they had got the routine in place, as it seemed to challenge normative organisational behaviour in a way they had not expected.

Our evidence suggests that students' accounts of their interactions with the dogs are frequently self-referential and objectifying, with students' appreciation of the dogs' behaviour usually related to their own needs, thus mimicking the instrumentalism of university policy. But some of the students seemed to regret the limitations of the interaction. The patience of the dogs and the lack of active engagement with individual students emphasises that these visits are not about establishing

relationships or active, two-way interactions but about making dogs' bodies available to touch. This reinforces both their subordination and objectification (Tuan, 1984). Furthermore, guardians exercise control in order that this can be accomplished. And unlike many other visiting situations, where dogs move from one person to the next and where there is sometimes scope for establishing a relationship (dogs are reported as having their favourites), in the university library they have to stay in one place and wait for groups of students to come to them. There is little scope for dogs to become attached to particular students; their subjectivity is eclipsed by the requirement for 'docile bodies' and, as we have seen, some students regret the lack of meaningful inter-subjective exchanges in these brief encounters.

Within these constraints the dogs are able to exercise a limited agency and, through the attentiveness of their guardians, can affect whether they continue with particular placements. In addition, they facilitate interactions between guardians and students, and students with each other, as well as their own controlled interactions with students. Their calmness calls forth a calm response from the students whose affective state appears to be changed through this encounter. The tenor of the sessions is, moreover, shaped not only by university organisational goals but also by the model provided by visiting organisations such as nursing homes, which remains so central to PAT's work.

We suggested in the Introduction that the contradictions inherent in the inclusion, exclusion and subordination of non-human animals have similarities to the inclusion, exclusion and subordination of women in organisations, in so far as women initially entered organisations — including universities — on sufferance; they were seen as inherently emotional, irrational and unpredictable, and, in the workplace, less susceptible to control through economic incentives than men (Banta 1995).
The PAT dog visits, as we have shown, are feminised in terms of participation, forms of interaction and ethos. We suggest that the patterns of inclusion and exclusion associated with them ensure that the challenges posed by the inclusion of animal bodies are contained and the anthropocentric organisational order is not significantly disrupted. Furthermore, the association of pet/PAT dogs with women and femininity is not accidental and taps into a long-standing cultural association of women and (pet) animals, something that trivialises both women and companion animals and helps to explain the feminisation of these events. They are organised largely by women, attended by women and the dogs are brought into the university by women. Most students thought that male students would feel uncomfortable attending a PAT session unless they came with women friends.

Finally we suggest that when organising stress-reducing programmes involving non-human animals, more attention needs to be paid to the instrumental thinking that underpins many of these programmes, and its implications for the non-human animals who participate. In particular, we need to examine whether support for occasional, contact between students and dogs, at least in the form we have described, while undoubtedly rewarding for students, not only reproduces the normative exclusion of animal bodies from organisational life but also depends upon their objectification.

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Figures

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

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[i] We refer to the dogs' human companions as guardians as well as companions.

[ii] Although for Haraway this question opens up a sphere of enquiry into all the ways in which touching a dog links you to dog-human histories, colonial conquest, forms of resistance etc., here we are confining ourselves to a more literal interpretation of her question.

[iii] As well as PAT dog visits to the library, Guide Dogs visits are organised by the Students' Union with the aim of raising money for Guide Dogs.

[iv] We also observed the Guide Dog visits to the Students' Union where the gender balance was different, more men students were present and there were men there from the Guide Dogs organisation. The atmosphere was also livelier, with a greater range of activity on the part of the dogs and students. Some dogs were even free to wander round the room off leash.

[v] Publicity for the Students' Union events is puppy-based and there is some suggestion that this is what he was referring to.